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# Contributions of Women to the Acquisition, Maintenance, and Discard of Portable Estates

## **Cover Page Footnote**

This paper derives from research conducted for my dissertation, and I thank Martha Pinello of Strawberry Banke Museum for making available to me data from the Mary Rider site. Numerous volunteers from Strawberry Banke helped me with the sorting and cataloging of artifacts, and in particular, I wish to single out Howard and Phyllis Crosby for their dogged commitment to scholarly work. I presented a version of this paper at the SHA meetings in 1996, and my thanks go to Mary Beaudry who persisted in harassing me to pull together a tighter, more grounded theoretical orientation. Finally, I appreciate the efforts of Ellen Marlatt—emotional, editorial, and spiritual—in assisting me to bring the paper to completion.

## Contributions of Women to the Acquisition, Maintenance, and Discard of Portable Estates

Kathleen L. Wheeler

*As we heighten our focus on the constituents of households, archaeologists are increasingly aware of the role females have to play in compiling and transmitting their portable estates. Women bring in dowries from their natal home, and they participate in choosing and buying household items such as teawares, tablewares, furnishings, and carpets. In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, several features have been discovered with substantial household inventories left behind as de facto refuse when a female head of household departs from the site. This paper explores the gendered nature of acquisition and abandonment behaviors at 19th-century urban sites to better reconstruct socioeconomic status of households.*

*Au fur et à mesure que nous nous concentrons davantage sur les constituants des ménages, les archéologues savent de plus en plus le rôle que les femmes ont à jouer dans la constitution et la transmission de leurs biens portables. Les femmes apportent une dot de leur maison natale et participent aux choix et à l'achat d'articles ménagers tels qu'articles à thé, articles de table, ameublement et tapis. A Portsmouth (New Hampshire), on a découvert plusieurs endroits où d'importantes quantités de biens ménagers ont été laissés comme déchets au moment où le chef féminin d'un ménage quitte le site. L'article examine la nature sexuelle des comportements d'acquisition et d'abandon dans des sites urbains du XIXe siècle afin de mieux reconstruire la situation socio-économique de certains ménages.*

### Contributions of Women to the Neolocal Estate

Historical archaeological studies of socioeconomic status have typically focused on the household socioeconomic standing using archaeological remains without considering the effect of women's consumption habits or contributions to the household's portable estate. Some of the early consumer behavior studies adopt an androcentric perspective, referring to the male heads of household without considering the input from female members of the household (e.g., Baugher and Venables 1987; Otto 1977), or lumping women into the "family" or "household" with little attention given to their active roles in contributing to the portable estate (LeeDecker et al. 1987; Orser 1984).

The following paper gives voice to women and their participation in acquisition behaviors, which are the source of material culture examined in archaeological context as "artifacts." Pinello (1989) distinguishes between

the "real" estate of land and housing and the "portable" estate of movable objects controlled by women. While 18th- and 19th-century legal practices maintained the feudal tradition of keeping land within a patrilineage by not allowing married women to own or transmit property (Salmon 1986), women were permitted to maintain possession of movable objects within the home (Howells 1937; Ward 1989). Given that most archaeological remains consist of a household's portable estate—movable objects such as ceramics, glassware, bedding, furniture, and jewelry—we need to better reconstruct the acquisition of such objects into the household to understand the contribution women make to our evaluations of socioeconomic status.

In most 19th-century marriages, the man owned and controlled the transmission of "real estate" or land (Chused 1987; Salmon 1986), while the woman left her birth home to live with her husband. Upon relocation to her new home, her neolocal residence, she might bring with her a dowry consisting of movable

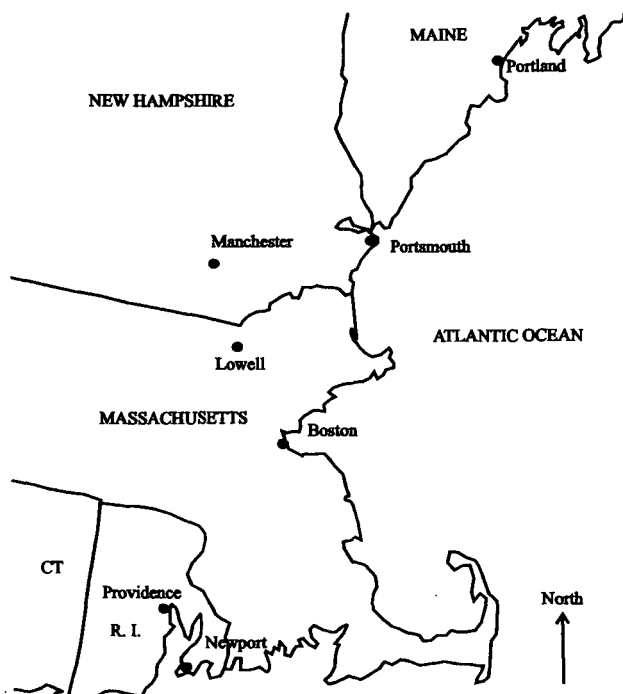


Figure 1. Locator map for Portsmouth, New Hampshire (after the American Automobile Association).

objects from her natal household. In addition to the natal-household dowry, women continued to influence the acquisition of movable objects with their consumption habits, management of household budgets, and the shopping for and ordering of replacement goods for the home.

For instance, Elizabeth Bleeker cataloged in her early 19th-century diary some of the purchases of household goods she made after her marriage (Wall 1994: 135). Among the selections were carpeting, wallpaper, chairs, and kitchen equipment. In July, she and her mother went shopping, and her mother bought her some cups and saucers. Later the same month, mother and daughter went to shop for pots and kettles, and in August, Elizabeth and her sister went to market in search of teapots (Wall 1994: 135). And while Elizabeth also forayed out on her own to shop for plates and dishes, the role of a supportive female network from the natal household is clearly apparent here.

I do not take the monolithic view that all 19th-century women selected household

ceramics or single-handedly controlled acquisition of their portable estate. This may have been true for single women and widows, but for married women, choices were probably negotiated between her and her husband. If men, for the most part, controlled the regular income and expenditures, women "often had independent sources of money from dairying, gardening, or raising chickens" (Spencer-Wood 1994: 402). In an urban setting such as early 19th-century Portsmouth, single, married, and widowed women were probably active participants in a market economy, which featured small retail shops (often owned by women) within walking distance of women's homes.

The archaeological trace of gendered relations can be seen in the mass deposits found after the termination of female lineages. In Portsmouth, New Hampshire (FIG. 1), excavations at the Deer Street neighborhood and at Strawberry Banke Museum revealed features filled with household assemblages. Documentary evidence and artifact analysis indicate that these massive single-phase deposits coin-

cide with the departure of female heads of household, whether by death or removal to another location.

### Behavioral Aspects of Discard

Before proceeding to a discussion of the Portsmouth features, it is important to define several terms related to the behavioral aspects of discard, particularly the forms of discard that occur when one household abandons a site that is immediately reoccupied. Abandonment, or *de facto*, refuse consists of trash left behind when a site or houseslot is vacated (Schiffer 1987). In urban settings, it is important to understand how continuous occupation at sites comprises both outgoing and incoming groups. One will leave behind the abandoned, or *de facto*, refuse, and the other has to find some means to deal with it.

In 19th-century Portsmouth (and probably other urban settings), refuse could comprise the entire material inventory of a house (Agnew 1989) or might consist of a smaller assemblage of items no longer desired by the departing household. The personal effects of an aged widow who dies might be dismissed as "old junk" by heirs or executors of the woman's estate, and an entire houseful of objects might be abandoned with little scavenging or reuse. On the other hand, a family who relocates to a new houseslot will probably take most of their material goods along to the next site of residency. Whether the amount of refuse is great or small, the responsibility for the discard of refuse will fall to the succeeding household, but the acquisition and use of the materials themselves will be associated with the departing group.

The newly arriving households will have several options for the disposal of unwanted goods. They may elect to pick over and salvage some materials for use in their own homes. A strategy of reclamation may have been critical for households with few material goods, as in the case of immigrants or young families in the early stages of marriage and childbearing. It is assumed, however, that in most cases women bring with them a portable estate, consisting of their own set of kitchen

and service wares and their personal items, and once they arrive in a household setting, they will discard all trash in a single episode to make room for their own effects.

On the small urban houseslot, disposal options may be limited, especially before formal programs of municipal trash removal were initiated. One option for the landowner is to create an opportunistic midden by throwing away trash in a pit or trench dug for one purpose used secondarily for the disposal of trash. At the houseslot, pits and trenches are regularly dug for a variety of purposes, such as to excavate new cellarholes, install fenceposts, inspect house foundations, lay drainage or sewer pipes, or dig a well. Once the holes have been excavated, they provide opportunistic occasions for the disposals of a large quantity of refuse. When archaeologists encounter these features, they are often designated as "trash pits." Dickens (1985) and Harris (1979, 1989) emphasize that garbage-filled pits can and should be distinguished from the holes originally dug to serve a purpose other than trash disposal.

When house sites are abandoned, the privy shaft becomes an ideal location for the opportunistic discard of "old junk." Confronted with trash and the previous owner's privy, incoming households can continue to use the privy shaft after dumping into it the discarded plates, bottles, and teawares of the departed group. At the base of the privy, these materials serve as drainage fill (Roberts and Barrett 1984) and enhance percolation of human wastes. A second option is to close down their predecessors' outhouse altogether and build a new one. In closing the old privy shaft, an incoming household will require 50 to 60 wheelbarrow loads of solid fill, some of which may consist of the refuse of the departing household.

I believe that mass deposits of reconstructable vessels found in privies can be tied to episodes of abandonment. At the Deer Street sites in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the abandoned privies seem to be additionally linked to the end of female lineages, or households with female heads. In other words, we are finding in Portsmouth a connection



Figure 2. North end of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with Deer Street neighborhood enclosed in block and site of Hart-Shortridge House circled. (after Hale 1813.)

between wholesale deposit of movable objects and abandonment, and this discovery has implications for understanding women's consumer behavior (Wheeler 1995a).

### Deer Street Features

In the North End of Portsmouth, the Deer Street neighborhood was the object of intensive salvage archaeology for five seasons between 1981 and 1985 (FIG. 2). Strawberry Banke Museum oversaw data collection and the processing and curation of thousands of artifacts from dozens of features exposed by backhoe excavation (Agnew 1989; Cox et al. 1981). Within these features, entire household assemblages were collected, consisting of bottles, sets of plates, teawares, and personal items.

At the Hart-Shortridge site on Deer Street, Feature 1 is a small stone-lined cellarhole (FIG. 3), where archaeologists retrieved 561 ceramic and glass vessels from the bottom of the feature (Agnew 1983, 1989; Edwards, Pendery,

and Agnew 1988; Roussel 1984). The ceramic assemblage can be divided into at least two distinct "sets" with an early group of Astbury, English white salt-glazed stoneware, and Whieldon types, and a later group of pearlwares (Edwards, Pendery, and Agnew 1988: 37). The earlier ceramics (dating from 1745 to 1800) reflect a high level of prosperity with numerous high-cost, imported earthenwares and exotic forms such as lemon drains, castors, and mustards. On the other hand, the wares manufactured after 1810 offer little in the way of diversity in form and decoration (Edwards, Pendery, and Agnew 1988: 37).

Feature 1 was located on property owned by John Hart, who lived there between 1760 and 1790. Upon his death, Hart provided for the maintenance of his housekeeper, Sarah Tripe, by transferring ownership of the real estate to her. Sarah Tripe lived in the Hart house an additional 20 years, and at her death in 1810, she deeded the property to her niece, Lois Shortridge, and two of her niece's children, Sarah Ann Adams and John Hart Short-

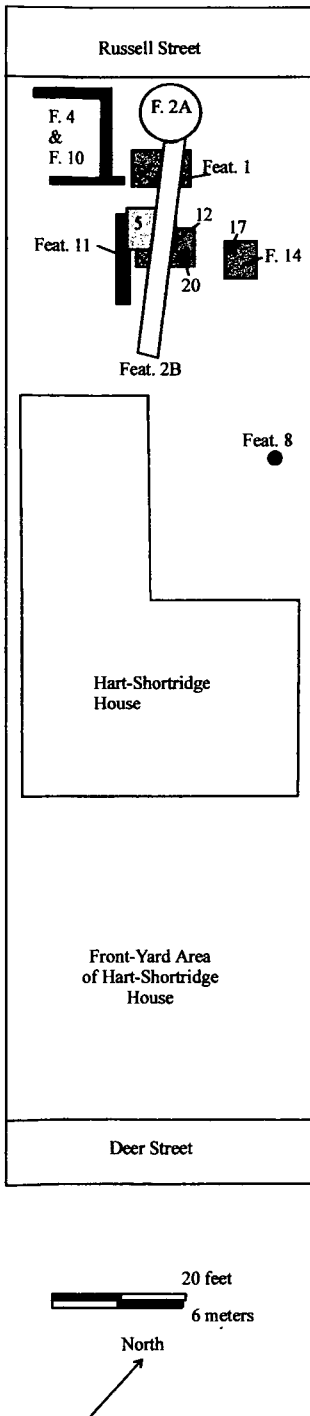


Figure 3. Plan showing the back-yard features behind the Hart-Shortridge House.

ridge. One or several of the Shortridge family members resided at the house until 1841, when Sarah Ann Adams left Portsmouth and rented the house to the Peter Jenness family.

The artifacts from Feature 1 can be understood as the houseful of movable objects left by Sarah Ann Adams upon her departure from Portsmouth. The high density of Feature 1 artifacts reflects four generations of portable estate—the household of John Hart; that of Sarah's great-aunt, Sarah Tripe; that of her mother, Lois Shortridge; and finally, her own (FIG. 4). The great diversity in the wares, styles, and forms reflects the expensive assemblage of John Hart, and the less extravagant sets of ceramics owned by housekeeper Sarah Tripe, the unmarried Lois Shortridge, who was forced to rent half her house for income, and the widowed Sarah Ann Adams.

Feature 1, then, consists of the abandoned portable estate of Sarah Ann Shortridge Adams deposited in a small, stone-lined cellar, subsequently reused as a privy by the succeeding Jenness family. Whatever purpose the cellarhole had served for the Hart-Tripe-Shortridge-Adams lineage was no longer applicable to the Jenness household, and in their reordering of the urban landscape, the Jennesses filled Feature 1 with the trash of the preceding household.

The same phenomenon of mass deposition occurred at the same site following the exodus of the female head of the Jenness lineage. Peter Jenness and his family occupied the Hart-Shortridge site for 28 years, from 1841 until 1869. After Peter Jenness died in 1865, his wife lived on at the property for another four years until she sold it in 1869. A second small feature, Feature 5, was excavated only a few meters south of Feature 1 (see FIG. 3), where it appears the abandoned belongings of Mrs. Jenness were discarded.

In Feature 5, 69 nearly complete ceramic and glass vessels were found (Agnew 1989: 27–30; Edwards, Pendery, and Agnew 1988: 47). The ceramic assemblage included transitional pearlware, yellowware, whiteware, and pink lustre and copper lustreware of English manufacture, while the glassware was primarily American made (Agnew 1989: 30). In addition, a wide range of personal hygiene and household objects was recovered,

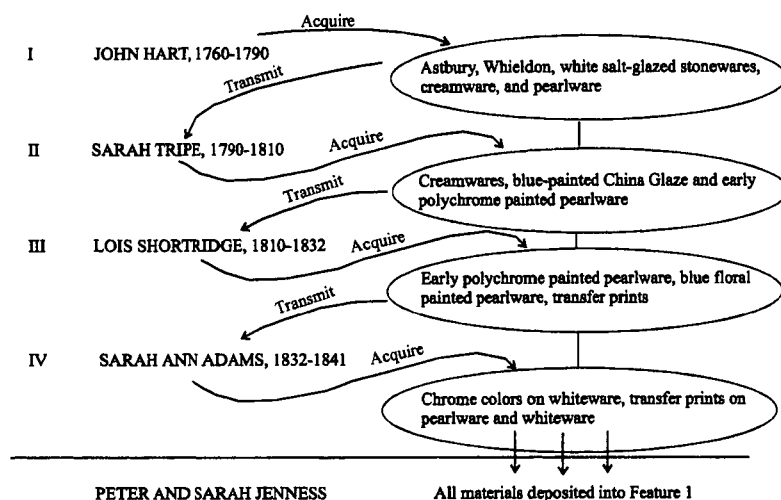


Figure 4. Four generations of transmission of a portable estate.

including a hairbrush, toothbrushes, a toothpaste container, tortoiseshell comb, umbrella, and a curtain tie-back (Agnew 1989: 30). All are household effects left behind when widow Sarah Jenness sold the property.

The two Deer Street examples were used to assist in the reinterpretation of remains found the Mary Rider privy at Strawberry Banke Museum. In the case of the two Deer Street features, it appears that mass deposits followed upon the "resignation" (either through demise or relocation) of female heads of household. These women, or their heirs, abandoned unwanted movable objects, which were subsequently dumped wholesale into old cellars or privy shafts for which the succeeding household had no need. For instance, when the Jenness family arrived at the Hart-Shortridge site, they closed an old stone-lined cellar by partially filling it with the Hart-Tripe-Shortridge-Adams portable estate.

### Rethinking the Rider-Wood Site

At the Rider-Wood site in Strawberry Banke Museum, a public-training program in 1981 resulted in the excavation of 14 1-meter squares behind and beneath the house (FIG. 5). More than 120 volunteers turned out for the

eight-week project, supervised by Project Co-Directors Gray Graffam and Laura Pope. From Graffam's (1981) preliminary report, Strawberry Banke Museum developed an interpretation of the life and times of Mary Rider, which stressed that the widow was struggling to make ends meet. Graffam placed the widow Rider in the larger neighborhood context of Puddle Dock of the second quarter of the 19th century, where

[p]erhaps through her own personal zeal, and the assistance of nearby relatives, Mary sustained her livelihood during this phase of Portsmouth's history, immigrants, laborers, and widows occupied the Puddle Dock district in increasing numbers, and Mary Rider's life may be somewhat characteristic of the area. (Graffam 1981: 4)

In portraying Mary Rider as an impoverished widow, Graffam (1981, 1984) relied heavily upon the analysis of artifacts from a privy located in the Rider backyard. At the bottom of the privy shaft, a deposit of ceramics dated to the second decade of the 19th century. Graffam linked this assemblage to Mary Rider and concluded that the widow was unable to replace ceramics after her hus-



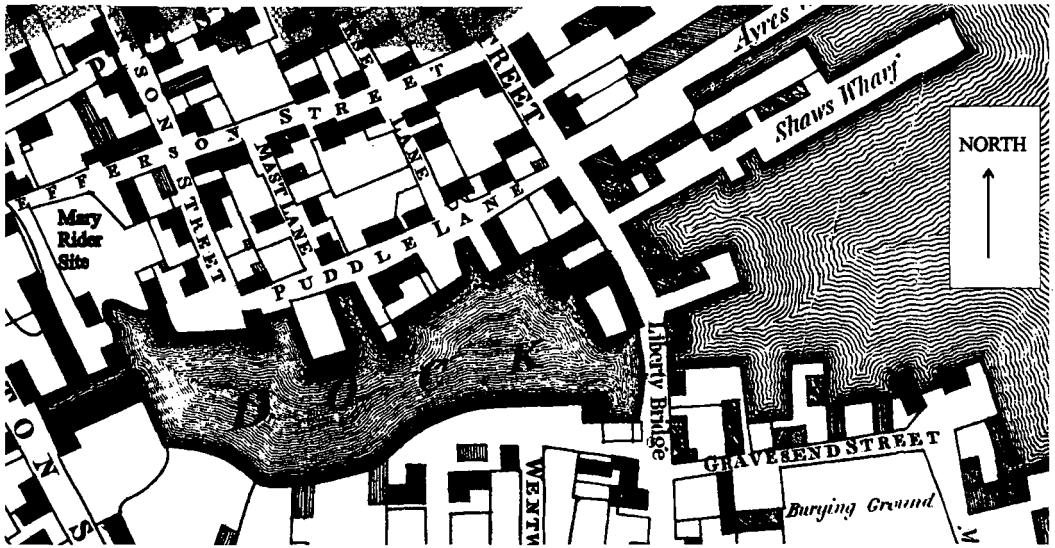


Figure 5. The Puddle Dock neighborhood with the Mary Rider site circled (after Hale 1813).

band died in 1819 and was left with an outdated set of ceramics until her death in 1863. Graffam focused on the privy vault without considering the formation processes of the feature, and he overlooked archaeological evidence from an open-air midden located south of the kitchen door.

Graffam's interpretations influenced how others viewed Mary Rider. From her reading of Mary Rider's probate, Handler noted that "(E)xcept for carpets and cookstove, her possessions were probably old and out of style when she died in 1863; she just kept using things made between 1790 and 1820, when she and John Rider were getting established" (Handler 1992: 35). Ward also found that when Rider's probate was taken in 1863, few objects described appear to postdate 1830 (Ward 1992: 89).

In 1990, I reanalyzed the Rider-Wood materials to review the lifeways of Mary Rider. In my reassessment, I analyzed archaeological remains from all of her backyard, as well as archival information from city directories, federal censuses, and tax assessment records to clarify the nature of Mary Rider's widowhood. It is pertinent to note that historical records are not devoid of the effects of "formation process," in terms of who is doing the recording, when, and why. In a room-to-

room survey, a male appraiser might classify a portable estate in far different terms than a female appraiser. The probate inventory of Mary Rider was compiled after her death, but the 94-year-old woman may have overseen the distribution of some of her portable estate over the course of her last years.

Agnew has traced an extensive female network at work in a system of bequests in Portsmouth between the years of 1820 and 1850 (Agnew 1994). In examining women's wills, she was able to look closely at the types of property women owned and managed. By defining within a codified legal document who was to be remembered and how, women controlled the selection of heirs and the nature of bequests. In this dispersion of their possessions, women bestowed money, clothing, blankets and other furnishings, jewelry, ceramics, and other types of movable objects to sisters, daughters, and friends. In the case of Mary Rider, as she approached her death, she may have initiated the process of disseminating personal items to nieces, friends, and church members. Her final probate inventory would then depict her "estate" after some measure of depletion.

A family genealogy reveals that Mary Mullis Rider and her husband John immigrated to Portsmouth in 1794, the year of their

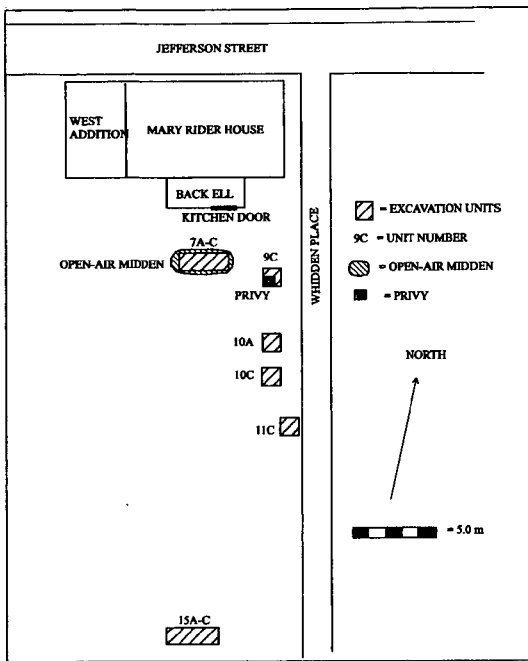


Figure 6. A plan of the excavation units and features in Mary Rider's backyard.

marriage in Devon, England (Henrickson 1990: ii, 1). The Riders bought the house at 1 Jefferson Street in 1809 when both were fairly advanced in age (Mary was 41). Ten years later, John died, leaving the house and property to his wife. Mary and John Rider did not have any children of their own, but when Mary's sister in Devonshire was widowed, Mary Rider assisted in the rearing of her sister's eight children by opening her home in Portsmouth until they could establish themselves with jobs or homes of their own (MacLennan 1987). Contrary to Graffam's notion that nearby relatives assisted the widow, it appears that Mary provided financial support to overseas relatives, as well as to those who resided in Portsmouth. The 1850 census notes the presence of 27-year-old Sarah S. Rider, and family genealogies record that several nieces and nephews were married at the home of Mary Rider (Henrickson 1990: ii; MacLennan 1987). Upon Mary Rider's death,

her estate was divided among 18 relatives with her nephew, James Wood, gaining possession of the real estate.

My reading of the documentary evidence indicated that something was amiss in Graffam's view of Mary Rider, who was depicted as sadly poor and struggling to make ends meet. The second aspect of the re-evaluation of Mary Rider was to consider the archaeological evidence of each of the backyard deposits encountered in 1981. Graffam focused on artifacts from a single privy feature without taking into account other archaeological deposits that date from the same period. In an open-air midden located about 5.0 m from her back door, at least 463 vessels were discarded by Mary Rider, who died with an estate valued at over \$10,000 dollars in 1864 currency (FIG. 6).

As discussed elsewhere (Wheeler 1995a, 1995b), dense concentrations of ceramics and fauna from an open-air midden just beyond

the kitchen door contradict the notion that Mary Rider was poor. In three phases of deposition, 463 ceramic vessels, most of them teawares, were discarded over the 54-year span of Mary Rider's occupation. The earliest use of the midden is linked to the occupation of Mary and John Rider between 1809 and 1818, with the second phase of trash disposal associated with the first two decades of Mary's widowhood, and the final deposit with the final two decades of Mary's life, 1841 to 1863. Within the open-air midden, and unlike within the privy, the distribution of ceramic types indicates a slow but steady replacement of wares over a 54-year period, from pearlwares to whitewares to ironstones. Given the distribution of ware types, it is certain Mary Rider did continue to purchase new ceramics after 1830.

Following Majewski and O'Brien (1987), I used decoration-based categories of ceramics as an analytic tool to tie deposits to the various phases of the Mary Rider household developmental cycle (Wheeler 1992). Miller (1980, 1991) and Majewski and O'Brien (1987) have demonstrated that the 19th century was a period of technological experimentation and innovation by British ceramic producers as they experimented with new formulas for body composition, exterior glazes, and underglaze decorative techniques. Decorative techniques and styles varied from decade to decade to meet the demands of a fickle market. Miller's (1980, 1991) studies of pricing lists and catalogs have chronicled the introduction of new styles, colors, and techniques of underglaze decoration. Hand-painted monochrome blue or polychrome designs tended to prevail in the first three decades of the 19th century and were slowly supplanted in popularity by transfer prints. Transfer-printed designs remained popular through the first half of the 1800s, but by the 1840s, decoration increasingly took the form of molded designs on unpainted vessels. These "plainer" wares were most popular through the 1860s and 1870s, after which transfer prints stressing oriental motifs became prevalent.

Analysis of the Rider ceramics from backyard deposits consisted of organizing vessels by surface decoration and generating a minimum vessel count to quantify the number of

behaviorally relevant units; i.e., the amount of plates, cups, bowls, or pitchers retrieved from archaeological context. I assumed that there exists a correlation between the quantity and type of ceramics discarded and the "ability" to acquire such ceramics in terms of socioeconomic status. The correlation is neither simple nor direct. High-status households may consume large quantities of ceramics but may not discard them in similar proportions. In general, however, the overall quantity of ceramic vessels and their relative costs should relate to the consumption patterns of the household discarding them.

The discovery and understanding of the open-air midden helped to rectify an image of Mary Rider's socioeconomic status, but it did not explain how two archaeologists had come to such divergent views. I looked again at the privy deposits to see how one might reevaluate the findings by focusing on the formation processes of the privy. Graffam (1981) interpreted the whole of the privy as being related to the occupation of Mary Rider, beginning with fecal deposits almost two meters below the ground surface. During my reanalysis, it was clear that there were at least four distinct deposits, including a mass deposit at the base of the privy with 62 ceramic vessels from 388 sherds, while two upper levels of nightsoil contained far fewer cultural materials (FIG. 7).

I reexamined the occupation history at the site and found that the household of Samuel Jackson occupied the site from 1780 to 1809. During this 29-year period, Samuel Jackson reared three children to adulthood before he died in 1805 and left his property equally divided between his widow, Sarah, and son, Henry. Sarah and Henry continued to live at the site for another four years, and after his mother's death in 1809, Henry sold the property to John Rider. The Samuel Jackson household is credited with having built the Rider-Wood house and probably had much to do in terms of laying out the grounds around the house (including the excavation of the privy).

## Analysis and Discussion

While the artifacts from a privy were previously used to reconstruct widow Rider's

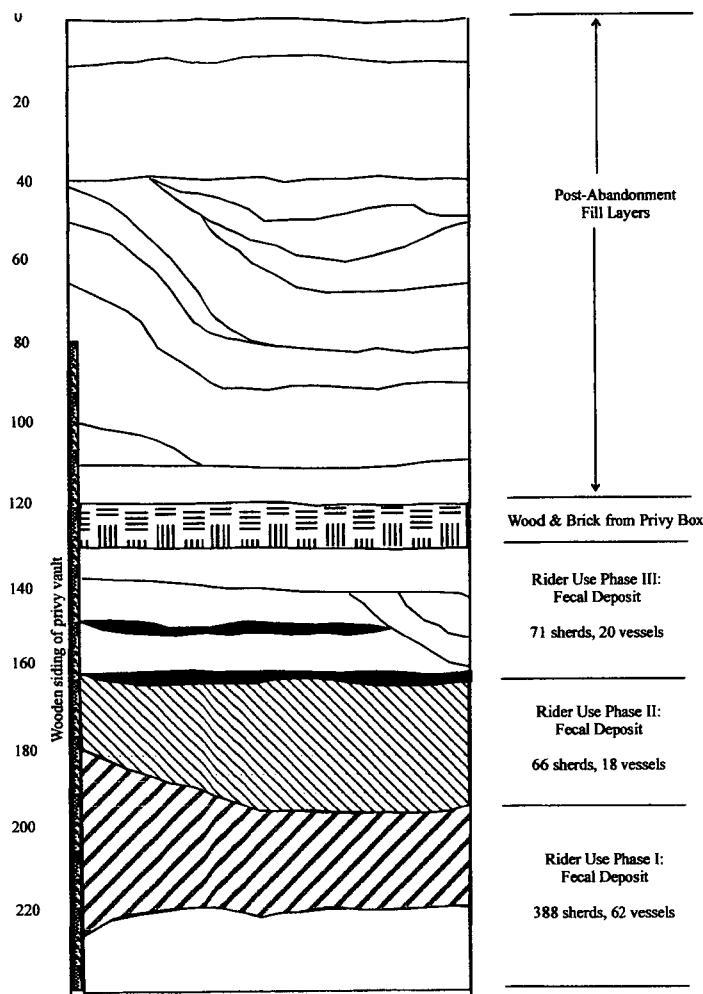


Figure 7. The south profile of the privy feature at the Mary Rider site.

socioeconomic status as impoverished (Graffam 1981), my reexamination of materials from other contexts at the site revealed an abundance of goods that kept pace with the times to the end of Mary's life. This reanalysis still did not explain the discrepancy between my findings and those of Graffam when interpreting the remains from the privy. Three use-phases were represented in the fill levels of the privy, with the bottommost one including 388 sherds that mended into 62 vessels. In the two uppermost strata combined, a total of 137 sherds corresponded to 38 vessels. It seemed

that two different kinds of deposition were in operation—one, a mass deposit of a household inventory, and the other, a more gradual discard of vessels.

Given the two case studies from the Hart-Shortridge site on Deer Street, I believe that the bottommost levels of the Mary Rider privy are not related to Mary Rider at all, but that they represent the wholesale disposal of widow Sarah Jackson's portable estate after her death in 1809. Upon their purchase of the former Jackson real estate, the Riders were required to clean out the abandoned remains

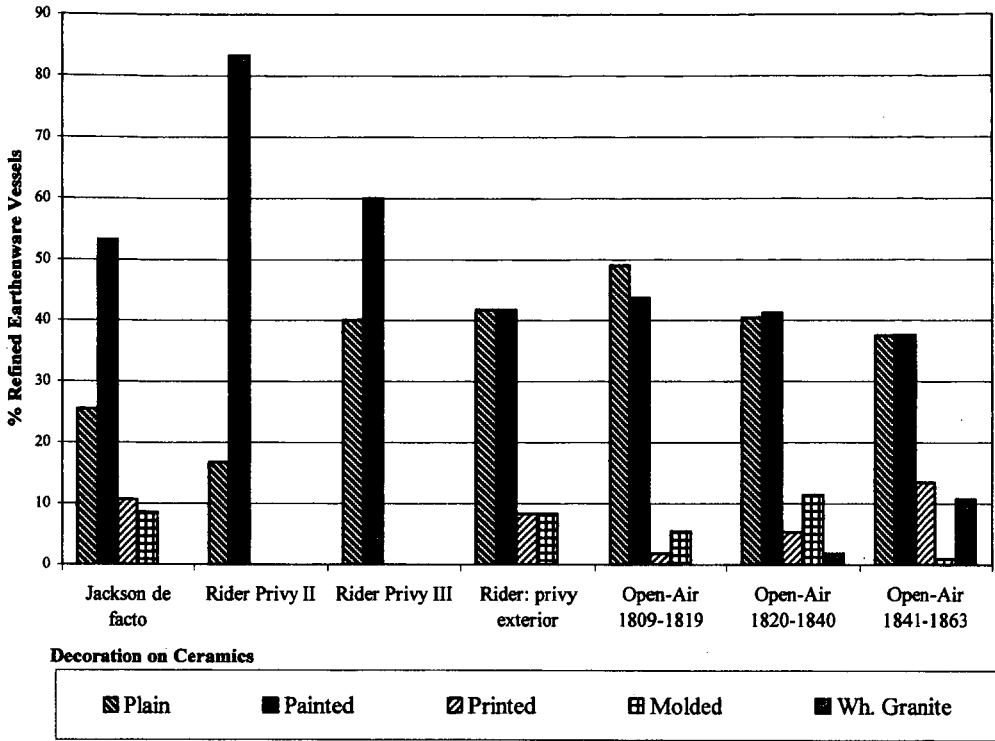


Figure 8. Proportions of ceramic decoration for different deposits at the Mary Rider site.

of Sarah Jackson's final effects—those materials for which son Henry had no further need.

Two pieces of archival data strengthen this argument. Henry Jackson, son of Samuel and Sarah Jackson, sold the house and property to John Rider on January 10, 1809, following the death of his mother. Exactly three weeks later, Henry Jackson married Elizabeth Kenny, and in the process acquired his wife's portable estate. His mother's old dishes and teawares were probably unwanted by Elizabeth, a new wife establishing her own household and female lineage.

In all three use-phases of the privy, the predominant ware type is pearlware, both painted and transfer-printed. Because of the high proportion of a single ware type, it is easy to imagine that one household discarded the pearlware. On the other hand, two different households occupied the site during the

time pearlware was widely available. Between at least 1790 and 1809, Sarah Jackson and Mary Rider both acquired ceramics from the same local market: i.e., green- and blue-edged plates, blue and polychrome floral painted teawares, and early printed wares. Even though the availability of ceramics would be similar for the two women, differences in consumer choice, however, would be reflected in the decorative styles of the individual assemblages. When the proportions of plain, painted, and printed decoration types were calculated for the different privy deposits, the values were found to vary from one level to the next. The proportions of decorative style were also calculated for the open-air midden associated with Mary Rider to compare with the pearlware assemblage at the bottom of the privy. The bottom-level privy deposit values were in sharp contrast to any values for the

Mary Rider open-air midden deposits, reflecting the difference in consumption patterns between the two women.

Figure 8 portrays the proportions of decoration styles on refined earthenware vessels for seven distinct deposits. At the bottom of the privy, materials are defined as the Jackson ceramic assemblage, left behind after the demise of Sarah Jackson. The assemblage dates to the first decade of the 19th century and is predominantly composed of painted styles, about 25% undecorated wares, and 10% printed vessels. In the first deposit linked to the Rider household, the open-air midden layer from 1809 to 1819 contains an assemblage with nearly half plain vessels, 45% painted, 5% molded, and only 1% printed vessels. For a comparable time period—ca. 1809—two distinct consumption patterns are in evidence, with the Jackson assemblage representing a generally higher-valued set of printed and painted wares, compared to the table- and teawares of John and Mary Rider. In Mary Rider's first use-phase of the open-air midden, plain vessels comprise nearly half of all refined earthenware vessels, twice the proportion of plain wares in Sarah's last phase of her portable estate. While plain vessels predominate in Mary's early assemblage (from 1809 to circa 1819), Sarah Jackson's assemblage is highly decorated, with almost two-thirds of all refined earthenware vessels decorated with some kind of surface treatment.

The two women acquired painted wares in nearly equal proportions—compare Jackson's 53.2% versus Rider's 43.6% of vessels with hand-painted decoration. The proportion of printed wares for Jackson, however, is nearly six times that for the early phase of Rider's assemblage. The differences in ratios of surface decoration can be viewed in the context of household developmental cycles; we are seeing the final culmination of Sarah Jackson's refined taste, while Mary Rider was building her household ceramic inventory at her new Jefferson Street house.

The other columns in Figure 8 depict the changes in acquisition patterns in the Rider household over time. The first two columns depict the proportions of decorative types for a comparable time period, circa 1809, to com-

pare the consumption habits of the two different households. As the Rider household matured, a pattern of replacing plain wares first with painted decoration and later with printed wares was observed in the three use-phases of Mary Rider's open-air midden. In the open-air midden, there was a tendency over time to replace the plain and painted wares with printed and molded decorations.

Moreover, in the basal levels of the privy, several ceramic items were found incompatible with the Mary Rider occupation, including several pieces of Chinese export porcelain (Carl Crossman, personal communication, 1995) and a Jackfield teapot and sugar bowl. While it is not inconceivable that Mary would have brought a small dowry from England to begin her household in America, it is more probable that these curated items derive from the earlier household of Samuel and Sarah Jackson.

Finally, Figure 8 portrays two distinct deposition patterns by comparing the trends in the open-air midden and the fecal deposits of the Rider privy (see FIG. 7). The 66 sherds of Rider Use Phase III and the 71 sherds of Rider Use Phase II represent an entirely different discard behavior from the 3265 sherds recovered from the three phases of the open-air midden. The trash heap just outside the kitchen door comprises a more reliable sample of Mary Rider's ceramic acquisition pattern than the random sherds she tossed into the privy. In examining the few sherds in the upper use-phases of the privy, it is clear that painted pearlwares predominated, but this meager sample does not reflect the day-to-day discard habits of Mary Rider.

The socioeconomic status of Mary Rider has been misinterpreted by an incorrect association of the privy contents with her long life. Following the two examples of mass deposits at the Hart-Shortridge site on Deer Street, we can disentangle the formation processes of the Rider privy and see that the earliest materials at the bottom of the feature probably have nothing to do with Mary Rider. The mass deposit of 62 ceramic vessels represents the final set of movable objects owned by Sarah Jackson, whose effects were abandoned by her son and his new wife once her tenure as

female head of household was terminated. Henry Jackson probably left his mother's "old things" behind, leaving it to Mary Rider—the new female head of household—to dump these items into the opportunistic privy. Even if the materials found their way into the privy by Henry's hand, their association with his mother—not Mary Rider—is still clear. The collection of glass and ceramic objects may have further served as drainage at the bottom of the privy (Roberts and Barrett 1984), but I think it principally served to make space for the portable estate of the incoming female, Mary Rider.

Female "lineages" of portable estates can span lengthy time periods, as in the case of Sarah Ann Adams's four generations of movable objects. Materials were inherited and passed from John Hart; to his housekeeper, Sarah Tripe; to Sarah's niece, Lois Shortridge; and to Lois's daughter, Sarah Ann Adams. The assemblage of personal belongings, tablewares, and teawares found in Feature 1 represents the cumulative acquisition of three female heads of household, which was finally discarded when Sarah Ann Adams left the property. At the same house site, the succeeding female head of household, Sarah Jenness, abandoned her unwanted household items after a single generation, where they were deposited in Feature 5, a small cellar used secondarily as a privy vault.

At the Rider-Wood site, the household inventory of Sarah Jackson was discarded in the basal levels of the Rider privy shaft. Overlap between the acquisition practices of Mary Rider and Sarah Jackson is evident in styles of ceramic decoration—both women had access to the same local retail market—but distinct preferences in consumption choices of the two women are also apparent. By clarifying the role women play in acquiring, owning, and transmitting their portable estate, analyses can be fine-tuned to better understand abandonment and reoccupation processes at urban sites.

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